

*Atoms for Peace  
Third Workshop  
Paris, 22-24 July 2003*

*Panel 3 : Governance : new problems, new responses  
Thérèse Delpech*

Sound governance is not possible without :

- a correct assessment of the main elements that must be taken into account
- an adequate translation of this assessment into actual policy
- a convincing communication strategy

What are the main elements that must be integrated ?

- Significant diversification of players. It is wrong to believe that the United States and the USSR approached nuclear weapons with the same concepts and the same doctrine. However, the current state of affairs is undoubtedly more complex, not only because of the greater number of players but also because of qualitative elements (motivations, behaviour and doctrines far less known and understood). We may be wrong when we think we understood the Soviets, but we are certainly right when we believe we do not grasp what Pyongyang and Teheran are actually up to. Hence possible miscalculations – something nuclear planners particularly fear - are becoming more probable than before. In addition, among new players, it is no longer possible to exclude terrorists, particularly if we think in terms of decades, and they look undeterrable almost by definition, since they have nothing to preserve and nothing to lose. Now whether this should be “*the*” main concern, as some observers believe, I am unable to tell. I would rather focus on both state and non-state proliferation, with possible interaction between the two.
- Increased nuclear relevance of Asia (true for nuclear power, also true for nuclear crises). That Europe is no longer *the* centre of strategic relations we know it only too well, but we do not devote sufficient attention to what has replaced it on the chessboard. From West Asia to South Asia and East Asia, what we have before us is an unpleasant form of multipolarity : nuclear multipolarity, notably in unstable zones : Middle East, India-Pakistan and East Asia where, apart from the question of the Korean Peninsula, which would in itself suffice to occupy us, three major powers (and in addition NWS) are involved in one way or another (China, Russia and the United States). Whether they will be wise enough to manage the nuclear dimension of their relationship is still hard to tell.
- Instead of receding, as we all thought at the beginning of the 1990s, nuclear proliferation may well be expanding significantly. To understand it, we need to take into account the diversification of players but also to consider the consequences - in terms of proliferation - of the possible inability to stop North Korea and Iran in their nuclear ambitions. The chain reaction that this could launch in East Asia and in the Arab world

(particularly Egypt and Saudi Arabia) with unpredictable consequences is one of the best reasons to address the two issues seriously without delay.

- The risk of nuclear use is increasing and this will be one if not *the* major security problem of the XXI century. Many reasons for that : weakening of deterrence, erosion of the nuclear taboo, nuclear weapons used to alter a strategic situation instead of keeping a status quo, or used as a threat more than as a last resort ...

### Translating this assessment into actual policy

- Reaching consensus on the above elements is probably feasible without much effort. What appears to be more difficult, though, is to draw conclusions from them.
- Three logical consequences should be drawn from the above points : first, to diminish as much as possible surprise and increase predictability by giving new impetus to international cooperation and arms control; second, to de-emphasize the role of nuclear weapons; and thirdly to close ranks among major powers in order to decrease risks, particularly risk of actual use. We are witnessing an almost opposite trend : the 2002 NPR is silent on international cooperation and the most recent nuclear accord (SORT) has got almost no verification whatsoever, leaving total freedom to both players to implement its provisions by 2012; instead of de-emphasizing the role of nuclear weapons, new roles are found (low yield weapons against buried targets); and far from closing ranks, cooperation among major powers is at best superficial.
- This lack of cooperation is particularly evident when facing the question asked as early as 1967 by Fred Ikle in his seminal article : “After violation, what?”. But violations of treaties also allow us to see whether eloquent speeches on the UN and multilateralism are more than just speeches and make any sense in the real world, when difficult choices have to be made. For instance, in January 2003, none of those giving international law great prominence in their statements recalled that withdrawing from a treaty *after violation* was not a legal option. If this legal situation is not clearly articulated, one cannot see why Iran would not follow the example set by North Korea : first procrastinate, then ignore the IAEA and try a bilateral agreement, and finally withdraw.
- My conclusion is that the strategy is clearer on the side of the proliferators than on the side of those wishing to prevent WMD proliferation and use. They appear to have learned from our mistakes. But have we ourselves learned from those mistakes?

### A convincing communication strategy

- There are a number of obstacles to building a good communication policy on WMD. And here again, unfortunately, proliferators appear to be better equipped than their opponents.
- The two main obstacles are related to : first, the complexity of the issue and second, its “unpleasantness”. It is difficult to explain, particularly

when chemical and bio weapons come to the fore, because ignorance in this area is abysmal. The complexity of the issue requires some serious work to be done to make people understand what the risks of proliferation are before a catastrophe happens, obliging them to learn from direct experience. Unpleasantness is even more serious. It is painful to warn people against WMD use because nobody wants to hear about it.

#### **Conclusion :**

After the Gulf War there was an opportunity to review and complement non proliferation policy. It was done pretty well at the time. Today, the same task lies before us with more ambitious goals :

- To recognize in the first place that dealing seriously with proliferation is a prerequisite for any significant expansion of nuclear power. The two goals can even less be separated today than 50 years ago.
- To deal with WMD terrorism able to challenge strategically even the most powerful nations. The UN Charter and the “jus ad bellum” inherited from WW2 are challenged by this phenomenon.
- To improve intelligence on non proliferation : on networks of procurement, build up of WMD programmes, patterns of cooperation (China-Iran, Pakistan-North Korea...) and actual sites (destruction of buried targets seems appears difficult when actual sites are unknown !). Communication of intelligence also needs some progress, as Iraq has shown.
- To renew international cooperation in order to minimize the risk of misunderstanding and to seriously deal with violations. The Permanent members of the Security Council should sit and agree on what should be done in such cases. A good occasion to do it : the two nuclear crises we face today (Iran and North Korea).

The bottom line is for us to become better on cooperation and communication than are the main proliferating countries. A starting point would be to recognize the changes under way : it is indeed the only way to encourage thinking and action. And we must remember that time is on the side of proliferators.